



Athletics Committee
March 17, 2026

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Ernest Grant, Chair
David Brown
George Hoyle
Dale Phipps
Tim Sessoms
Fox Brown, SGA President

Brian Mackin, Director of Athletics; Liaison

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Frank Gilliam; Brian Mackin, Director of Athletics, Jerry Blakemore, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Danielle Sandridge, Executive Assistant to the Director of Athletics; Kelly Harris, Associate Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees, and other members of staff and general public.

PROCEEDINGS

Chair Ernest Grant called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and read the Conflict-of-Interest Statement from the State Government Ethics Act. No conflicts were identified.

Roll call was read and a quorum was confirmed.

Approval of Minutes: On roll call vote, the minutes of the September 9, 2025, Athletics Committee meeting were approved without additions or corrections.

Discussion/Information Items:

ATH - 1 Chris Rich, Men's Soccer Head Coach

The Committee heard from Men's Soccer Head Coach Chris Rich, who in eight years has amassed four SoCon regular season titles, two SoCon tournament championships, and NCAA tournament appearances to both the Elite Eight and Sweet 16. Last season, his team was ranked #14 in the country, and his student athletes, many of whom have gone on to play professionally, have earned multiple honors and accolades.

Coach Rich reported that the program's goals have evolved from winning a SoCon Championship to competing for a National Championship and establishing UNCG as a national leader. To complement his strong staff, Coach Rich recently hired a high-profile Assistant Coach, Jason O'Keefe. In addition to a 20-year coaching pedigree, Coach O'Keefe has been a licensed FIFA agent for the past three years recruiting and scouting top youth players. After losing eight starters, primarily to professional contracts, Coach Rich is rebuilding the roster, emphasizing international recruiting, and leveraging strong international connections. He recently brought in six players, achieving a top fifteen recruiting class, with plans to add one or two more elite players. He also noted, with pride, that the team earned a 3.59 GPA this past fall.

Coach reflected on the challenges with the NIL landscape but cited strong institutional and donor support. The lack of transparency around NIL incentives at peer institutions can be frustrating. A greater constraint is the SoCon's 9.9 scholarship limit, which puts the program at a disadvantage compared to the NCAA maximum of 28. Coach Rich continues to utilize a possession-based system and prioritizes a strong national schedule to improve rankings, with plans to face 10 top 50 teams next year.

Finally, he shared that the transfer portal has had minimal impact, with many more players leaving for professional opportunities than transferring, which is reflective of the program's success in player development.

ATH - 2 Spring and Fall 2025 Sports Update

AD Brian Mackin highlighted the achievements of the fall and winter sports programs. Many athletes earned All-Freshman, All-SoCon First and Second Team, All-District and Academic Honors. Among other highlights:

- Men's Soccer reached the Sweet Sixteen of the NCAA tournament and concluded the season ranked #14 in the country. Two players were drafted into the MLS.
- Women's Soccer (4-12-5) saw two players sign professional contracts in Australia and has a strong recruiting class coming in.
- Volleyball (17-12) had its first winning season since 2018. Post season, the head coach left to take a position at Vanderbilt and has been succeeded by former assistant coach Trent Dunahoo.
- Men's Cross Country tied its best finish since 2011 in the SoCon Championships and best result since 2014 in the NCAA Southeast Regional.
- Women's Cross Country finished 8th in the SoCon Championships.
- Both Men's and Women's Basketball had transition years, losing depth and maturity. Men's Basketball concluded at 15-19 overall and 9-9 in the SoCon. Women's Basketball concluded their season at 14-16 overall and 4-10 in the SoCon.

- Men's Indoor Track saw the 4000m distance relay team take home bronze at the SoCon Indoor Championships. Four school records were broken during the season. Women's Indoor Track saw four school records broken this season.
- Men's Golf has played in 7 of 12 tournaments, with three top five finishes so far. The team is ranked #105 in Clipped College National Rankings. Women's Golf has competed in 6 of 9 tournaments this season with three top three team finishes and one first place finish. They are ranked #111 nationally.
- The Spring sports of Baseball, Softball and men's and women's Tennis are underway.

ATH - 3 Spring 2025 Academic Summary

AD Mackin expressed his pride in our student-athletes' tremendous accomplishments, both in the classroom and in the community – with good reason. In academics, the fall semester reflected an all-time high GPA of 3.5. Women's tennis led the way with a 3.82 GPA, while 80% of all student-athletes earned a GPA greater than 3.0. Collectively, UNCG's student athletes completed approximately 995 community engagement and service hours throughout the fall.

Transition to Closed Session

Chair Grant moved to convene in closed session pursuant to Section 143-318.11(a)(1),(5), and (6) of the North Carolina Open Meetings Law, to prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential or not considered a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, consider the amount of compensation and other material terms of an employment contract or proposed employment contract, and consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an employee or prospective employee.

Trustee Phipps seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Closed session began at 4:00 pm.

General Account of Closed Session Discussion

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ernest Grant, Chair; David Brown, Fox Brown, George Hoyle, Dale Phipps, Tim Sessoms

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr.; Brian Mackin, Director of Athletics; Jerry Blakemore, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Kelly Harris, Associate Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees

ATH – 4 Head Coach Contracts

AD Mackin presented two head coach contracts for the committee's discussion and consideration.

The closed session concluded at 4:14 p.m.

Open Session

Following return to open session, Chair Grant confirmed that closed session discussion was limited to the two head coach contracts presented in agenda item ATH – 1.

ATH – 1 Head Coach Contracts

Chair Hoyle invited a motion to approve the head coach contracts presented in ATH – 1. Trustee Sessoms made the motion, which was seconded by Trustee Phipps. The motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kelly Harris", written in dark ink.

Kelly Harris
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees